United Nations A/C.5/53/SR.66

General Assembly
Fifty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
21 July 1999

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 66th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 13 July 1999, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Abelian ..... (Armenia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mseile

Contents

Agenda item 118: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (*continued*)

Other matters

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

99-81190 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

Agenda item 118: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (*continued*)

Letters from the President and the Acting President of the General Assembly to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee (continued) (A/C.5/53/64 and A/C.5/53/65)

1. **Mr. Ahounou** (Côte d'Ivoire) expressed his delegation's strong dissatisfaction with the Chairman's approach to solving the problem presented by the request of the Permanent Representative of Georgia for exemption under Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations, contained in document A/C.5/53/65. In his delegation's view, the Chairman had failed to provide delegations with clear instructions with regard to the procedures to be followed, in the informal informal discussions following his suspension of the previous meeting. A consensus appeared to have emerged in favour of accepting the request of Georgia, yet not all delegations had been allowed to participate in the informal informal discussion of it.

2. **The Chairman** stressed that he had not prevented any Member States from participating in the informal informal discussion, and that since no consensus had actually been reached on the request, he had had no choice but to consult with the Member States concerned.

3. **Mr. Yussuf** (United Republic of Tanzania) expressed his delegation's support for the views expressed by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire. The Committee should follow the procedures that it had itself set out. If a consensus could not be arrived at in a formal meeting, the Committee could hold informal consultations, reserving informal informal discussion as a last resort.

The meeting was suspended at 3.45 p.m. and resumed at 5.45 p.m.

Draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.77

4. **The Chairman**, introducing draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.77, said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution.

5. *Draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.77 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.78 on the request by Georgia

6. **The Chairman**, introducing draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.78, said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution.

7. *Draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.78 was adopted.*

8. **Mr. Sareva** (Finland), speaking in explanation of position on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union's views on draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.78 would be expressed in a plenary meeting of the General Assembly.

9. **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico) said that all applications for exemptions under Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations should be considered on their own merits, on a case-by-case basis. His delegation hoped that, in future, draft resolutions concerning exemptions would meet all procedural and translation requirements, and that the approach just taken by the Committee did not become practice.

10. **Mr. Dvinianine** (Russian Federation) said that, while his delegation had joined the consensus in sympathy with the difficult economic situation of Georgia, it believed that all Member States should adhere to the established rules of procedure.

11. **Ms. Buergo-Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that her delegation had joined the consensus on both draft resolutions on an exceptional basis, despite the laxity in procedure and the failure to translate the texts into the Organization's other official languages. With regard to draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.78, she reaffirmed the role of the General Assembly and the need for the Committee on Contributions to consider such matters in accordance with established procedure. She fully agreed that, in future, requests for exemption should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Her delegation deeply regretted that the Committee on Contributions had been unable to submit a recommendation to the Fifth Committee, which would have eased its task considerably.

12. **Mr. Armitage** (Australia), speaking on behalf of Canada and New Zealand as well, said that they had had misgivings about the procedural basis for the Committee's decision and had therefore joined the consensus reluctantly. As he had stated earlier, requests for exemptions under Article 19 should be considered by the Committee on Contributions before the General Assembly exercise its decision-making authority. That view, which had garnered little support in the Committee, was based on a firm belief in the need to safeguard Article 19 as an effective instrument to encourage the timely payment of assessed contributions.

The approach which the Committee had taken would only complicate consideration of future requests for exemptions in a fair and consistent manner. It was also regrettable that the Committee on Contributions had been unable to advise the Fifth Committee. In seeking exemptions, Member States should make every effort to abide by the procedures of the relevant expert bodies. Lastly, the Fifth Committee should explore ways and means of avoiding the kind of dilemma in which it had found itself.

13. **Mr. Jara** (Chile) said that his delegation had been prepared, early on, to grant an exemption to Georgia and had therefore joined the consensus. It believed, however, that such action should be taken only by a decision of the General Assembly or on the advice of the Committee on Contributions, based on the outcome of a formal meeting of that body. Deviating from the usual procedure only undermined the role of the Committee on Contributions. In his delegations's view, draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.78 was one of the most unfortunate and controversial draft resolutions ever adopted by the Fifth Committee, particularly, in view of its future implications.

14. **Mr. Park Hae-yun** (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation had joined the consensus on draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.78 in view of the difficult circumstances facing Georgia. It regretted, however, that the Fifth Committee, disregarding the procedure set out in rule 160 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, had not based its decision on a recommendation by the Committee on Contributions.

15. **Mr. Volski** (Georgia) expressed his delegation's deep appreciation for the Committee members' understanding, which had ultimately prevailed over any reservations, however justified, that they might have had.

16. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) supported by **Mr. Yussuf** (Tanzania), expressed concern that adoption of the draft resolution had undermined the role of the General Assembly and of its expert body, the Committee on Contributions. With regard to exemptions, in the past, his delegation had championed the cause of countries facing economic difficulties and would continue to do so, provided the proper procedures were followed. While his delegation had not wished to block the consensus on draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.78, it had had difficulty joining it. In particular, it had problems with the phrase "taking into account the views expressed by Member States" in paragraph 2 of the draft resolution, which was vague, misleading and devoid of content, and the phrase "until a final decision on the matter is taken by the General Assembly" in paragraph 3, which was equally imprecise.

17. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan) said that his delegation strongly supported both draft resolutions, since the five Member States in question were unable to pay owing to conditions beyond their control. Citing the second sentence of Article 19 of the Charter and the final sentence of rule 160 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, he said that the adoption of the draft resolutions undermined neither the prerogative of the General Assembly nor the mandate of the Committee on Contributions. He hoped that, when it did consider Georgia's request, the Committee on Contributions would take into account the views of his delegation.

18. **Mr. Saha** (India) said that his delegation had joined the consensus on draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.78 in recognition of the genuine difficulties faced by Georgia. Given the flexibility shown by Committee members, he was confident that that procedure, which was supposedly designed to help Member States, could be addressed during the next session of the General Assembly on a priority basis.

Other matters

19. **Ms. Buergo-Rodríguez** (Cuba), supported by **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda), expressed concern at the emerging practice of deviating from the Fifth Committee's established decision-making procedure, namely, the introduction of agenda items by the relevant committee chairmen, followed by consideration in formal and, if necessary, informal meetings. She noted, in particular, the departure from standard practice with regard to the question of East Timor and the request by Georgia. In that context, she wondered whether Member States should engage in an in-depth review of the working methods of the Fifth Committee.

20. **The Chairman** said that it was not his intention to change the Committee's working methods. He had departed from standard procedure in the case of East Timor owing to the scope, nature and sensitivity of the question, but not in the case of 17 other peacekeeping operations. With regard to the draft resolution on the request by Georgia, he would have entertained all requests to have the item introduced by the Chairman of the Committee on Contributions or to defer a decision; however, such requests should have been made at the very outset of the Fifth Committee's deliberations.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.